

OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD

No one ever tried to kill me until I joined the Branch Davidian Church. After I joined, our awesome God intervened a number of times to protect me. The guiding principle, if God does not want you to die, you don't die.

In March of 1988, five months after I joined the church, David Koresh did a hostile takeover of the church property on the day after George Roden, the last living original trustee, was sentenced to six months for contempt of court. (He called Judge Walter Smith "a Goddamn tyrant.") George had appointed me a trustee several months earlier, so he added me to his lawsuit to remove Koresh (whose claim was specifically forbidden by church law). This trusteeship caused me to do legwork for George, who was in jail. Additionally, I recopied his lawsuit because his handwriting was illegible and the clerk refused to accept it. I filed it for him.

This doesn't seem like anything to kill someone over, however our church preaches that the Kingdom of God will start as a tiny church with a big message explaining prophecy, and it will overthrow the nations (Dan 2:31-44). We also preach that land ownership is a human right (Micah 4:4) and that everyone is allotted land without payment in the Kingdom of God. (As Christ said, "Blessed are the meek; for they will inherit the earth." Matt. 5:5). Ours is the kind of church that the people who own huge tracts of land and pay campaign expenses would prefer did not prosper. The first land ripoff was in the 1960s. Koresh was the man chosen to do the second land ripoff.

I was empowering George Roden to fight, and he had both church law and legal precedent on his side. I'll say this for them, they did not want to hurt my son, Stanley. They waited until my son was away in Stephenville overnight for an intercollegiate competition. It is also possible that they only wanted to scare me (it worked). Before George went to jail he gave me his red Doberman and his 357. Red was a good watchdog, because he only barked at people. I lived a half mile off the road behind a locked gate. The neighbors who lived close to my gate were some protection as well.

I heard Red bark that Saturday morning at 4 A.M. I sat up and held George's 357 in my lap. I heard one of them outside the front door, then the other outside the back. I had just time to think about how much trouble I was in when I heard a car door slam in the distance. I don't know if it was a deputy sheriff having a look at the car they had to leave up on the road in front of my farm. They didn't either. Red barked at them again as they left.

As the struggle over the property continued, there were other attempts. George was tried again for contempt of court in Sept. 1988, and sentenced to another 3 months. (He claimed he was the leader of the church in defiance of a 1985 restraining order which supported his mother's leadership. She died in 1986.)

George's church property lawsuit was dismissed by summary judgment in January, 1989. He filed papers in Deed Records which dealt with the church property and another warrant for contempt of court was issued. George moved to Odessa after asking his friend, my fellow trustee, Tom Drake to protect me. I continued the legal battle in the Federal courts. I thought it was a freedom of religion issue, the right of a church to choose its own leadership.

Someone unscrewed two hose clamps on the fuel lines of my old Volvo (I smelled the gas when I stopped to open the gate and tightened them again). Tom moved into the 20' by 20' storage building on my farm to protect me. Tom was incensed because someone was pissing on the gatepost and leaving the gate open. One night he chased intruders off the farm wearing only George's 357. The harassment abruptly ended. I suppose the fact that he didn't wait to even put on his boots gave them a message.

My Volvo had been cross-wired by persons unknown, and a trip to Dallas put it off the road. Tom, who could fix cars, but did not like the work, found Johnny Franklin McNeil to fix the Volvo. Tom and Johnny took the Volvo for a test drive and Tom came back spitting flames. Three of the leads to the fuel injectors had blown up on the test drive. Worse, the hose Johnny had bought to replace the blown hoses was not high pressure hose. Tom had to go back to town and buy the right hose. He turned an old tub over and sat on the front steps to cut new sections to replace all six leads. After a while he called me over and showed me the three original leads he had replaced. Each of them had a gouge which went almost all the way through.

Although a few people did hurt me slightly at the Branch Davidian Church property in Waco, many more appeared to want to hurt me, and went away without doing so. Here are a few of the situations that I thought should have been dangerous.

In the fall of 1993, I was sitting in my 8' by 8' by 8' dwelling (which I build with mostly found materials for a cost of less than \$100). In the yard, five or six people surrounded the 4' by 4' standing display with its eye-level read boards. Half of my dwelling was a sheet of plywood (with futon) bed, so I was sitting on the bed just inside the door. Four oriental men of about thirty with hard faces and bodies, parked and walked rapidly directly to the door of my house. Because they were oriental and I assumed they valued politeness, I said, "Can I help you," and smiled.

The two men at the back turned and left immediately. The first man was already in my house, just inside the door. He was bent over, cringing away from me, staring at something he saw behind me. The remaining man was standing on the threshold, watching the first man, looking both surprised and confused. I thought, "These men are here to hurt me," and struggled to keep

that thought from showing on my face.

Suddenly, as I looked out the door, I noticed that the people who had been reading in the yard were standing behind the orientals, apparently attracted by the commotion. The man on the threshold must have noticed from my face that they were there, or heard them speak. He did not turn, but he spoke some words incomprehensible to me, and both men left immediately. I smiled and spoke reassuringly to the people standing outside my door. They drifted back to the display. The whole incident was over in two minutes.

I should start describing the next incident by saying that it was extremely rare for me to ever be afraid of any one on sight. In the fall of 1994, I was standing outside the door of my dwelling. Because a guardian angel had requested the night before that I clean up and wear a pretty dress, I was shiny clean and wearing what I thought of as my second grade school teacher dress. It was in a colorful floral print with a big white shawl collar and a sash that tied in back. I was painting on the small mural of the church logo that was almost finished on the door. I was not worried about harming the dress because I was using a very fine brush touching up tiny details. The day was warm and the sun was shining. Birds were singing.

He came around the building Andrew Hood had built and he walked into my yard. He was a small man, very handsome, wearing a brown double-breasted suit, with round brown aviator sunglasses. I was afraid of him on sight. I turned back to my painting as he walked up to me, then back to him as he stopped next to me. Our eyes met. Two Italian men came around the Loud Cry Museum that replaced the standing display and walked into the only door of the museum, which faced my house. The man in brown said to me, "To the best of my knowledge Jesus Christ never carried a sword." (I assumed later that he was referring to Koresh's claim that he was a sinful messiah and his armed church.) I replied at once without thinking, "To the best of my knowledge God put a sword in my mouth."

While he pondered that, I suggested that he should go down to visit the Memorial and the ruin. He went. I was pleased with the reply my guardian angel had put in my mouth, I thought that with this man the issues should be defined immediately. When he came back, I was still painting. He stopped beside me and we looked at each other. He said, "There is nothing left down there but the sorrow." I thought "This man is not going to hurt me." "You should see the museum," I said.

As he entered the museum, I became absolutely convinced that he would let me know that he had come to kill me before he left. His whole demeanor shouted it. He approached me as he came out of the museum. Our eyes met again. He said, "You know there are some swords that are not of God." My voice cracked as I softly answered him, "Yes Sir, I know you're right, Sir."

One man from Ecuador wanted my permission to kill me. I was sitting in my little red camp chair. He crouched down next to me and began to explain that when Christ was crucified, his soul was freed to go to God and so anyone who died in the service of God needed someone to kill them so that they could go to heaven. He began to stroke the side of my neck as he gently explained, presumable to let me know it would be quick. My guardian angel told me not to resist, so I (quite uncharacteristically) let him continue to stroke my neck. I explained to him from the scriptures that we would come alive into the Kingdom of God in the end time. I was very friendly and pleasant and we discussed scripture for a few minutes until he left.

Another man came over to me after he parked his pickup and began talking to me in a very disconnected way. I was confused because he sounded mentally ill, but he was clean and so was his big new-looking pickup. My guardian angel told me, "This man is a not guilty by reason of insanity verdict and you are the victim." I was very pleasant and helpful, just as if he was making sense.

He wandered away and then came back to give me a lengthy proof that the mileage on Koresh's newer bus (150,000 or thereabouts) was the same as 666 (the biblical number of the beast - Rev. 13). I smiled at him and despite my degree in mathematics (U. Maine 1964) I agreed with his reasoning. He went away again, but he came back as I was answering questions for two reporters. He accused them of trying to poison me. I didn't know what to say, so I went into my shack, closed the door and counted to thirty. Then I came out smiling, pretended that he hadn't said anything and continued the interview. I suppose he knew by then that there was no way I would fight with him. He got in his truck and drove away.

At that time I rode my bike to town once a week to buy supplies. In the summer I left before dawn and got back in the early afternoon. I came back once to a pair of motorcyclists who were reading my building. (The fancy display was inside at night and when I went in town, but I had written articles that the fancy display covered, for those who came late or when I was gone.) The cyclists were quite civil to me but they never took their helmets off or raised their tinted face-plates, so I never saw their faces.

One morning on the way to town in the dark, I saw headlights coming at me from town. I was at the bottom of the mile-long hill which ran from near the intersection of Fm. Rd. 2491 and Fm. Rd. 2957 toward town. My habit, because it was dark and I rode facing traffic (a precaution that subsequently saved my life several times), was to dismount the bike and walk it several feet off the road. I did so, but it appeared that the vehicle was aiming for me anyway. At the last moment headlights shining down the hill illuminated me and the vehicle and it changed direction.

On that same morning, Tom (who was working construction in

Dallas because we were broke) discovered that one of his gas lines was spraying gas on the manifold of his van (manifolds get very hot), and a woman was arrested (as a crazy person) for hacking up the altar Charlie Pace placed on the church property. News footage taken of her from the back looked so much like me that my friends stopped visiting for a while thinking I had been arrested.

There were others as well, but you get the idea. Our God is an awesome God.

Amo Paul Bishop Roden